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## University Libraries Personnel Policy Committee (ULPPC) response to the ULFA - Racism Impact Statement

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To: Patrick Roth, Chair of ULPPC

CC: Emily Frigo (Designated Unit Head), Ashley Rosener (Chair, ULFA), Matt Ruen (Incoming Chair, ULFA), Ed Aboufadel, Kristin Meyer (Ex Officio of ULPPC)

From: Annie Bélanger, Dean of University Libraries

**Subject: Dean's Response to University Libraries Personnel Policy Committee (ULPPC) response to the ULFA - Racism Impact Statement**

Date: June 14, 2023

I received ULPPC's response to the ULFA racism impact statement. I greatly appreciate the work of ULPPC in crafting this action-focused response as well as the engagement with the faculty in gaining support for the response. The response makes clear the wish of ULPPC to show care, leverage an equity lens, and uphold our commitment to all of our colleagues for healthy processes as we move forward with contract renewal and tenure personnel actions.

The steps taken to date are critically important and yet are only a starting point. I support the expectation of leveraging an equity lens and decentering whiteness in the next review of our personnel guidelines. I look forward to a recommendation with associated cost estimates.

I approve of the ULPPC Response to the ULFA Racism Impact Statement. I would encourage us to consider its addition to our website so that others may be aware of our efforts as well as offer transparency to future faculty candidates.

I want to thank the faculty body on this moment of solidarity,



Annie Bélanger

# University Libraries Personnel Policy Committee (ULPPC) response to the ULFA - Racism Impact Statement

The [ULFA Racism Impact Statement](#) states that racism and white supremacy culture have a profound impact on nonwhite faculty in higher education and throughout the tenure and promotion process. We know that nonwhite faculty within the GVSU Libraries have been impacted and can be further marginalized due to the bureaucratic nature of the process that renders harm invisible. Practices such as anonymous comments that lack context create ambiguity and can leave faculty “unsure if the rudeness, rejection, or resentment is the result of actual bias” and left “unsure of what actually happened or how to convince others of what happened.” The onus is put on the individual to build their case, further exacerbating the power differential. Our unit reviews impact a faculty member’s career, livelihood, and how they experience the day-to-day workplace.

ULPPC recognizes that the tenure and promotion process at GVSU is a system rooted in racism and we are limited in the scale/scope of changes we are able to make to the process. While we are limited by the requirement to work within the systems set up by GVSU, we can make criteria more specific and clearer in an effort to reduce the harm caused by systemic racism.

In response to this, ULPPC is committed to taking the following steps to mitigate white supremacy culture in our tenure and promotion policies and processes:

- Faculty Unit Review Agenda
  - Individuals have the chance to respond verbally or in writing to and question agenda comments
  - The [ULFA Best Practices for the Preparation and Review of Personnel Portfolios](#) document was updated:
    - to provide suggestions and reflective prompts on how to read the portfolios and connect to review criteria for each level: contract renewal, tenure, and promotion
    - to clarify how the DUH may edit or remove comments from unit agendas
    - to recommend that faculty compile all their agenda comments in one document before submitting in order to pause and consider whether a consistent level of engagement and rigor has been applied across all candidates regardless of role type and identities.
- ULPPC Review of agendas
  - Employ an equity lens when reviewing submitted comments, questions, and concerns for the agenda

- Review agenda comments to ensure they are clear, direct, and connect to tenure/promotion criteria
- Review agendas to ascertain whether the criteria were applied evenly across candidates, regardless of race
- DUH
  - Review unit documentation for consistency among candidates and year to year

In addition, the ULPPC is committed to the following:

- We will advocate for funding to perform an equity audit of our library guidelines by an internal or external group.
- We will review tenure and promotion guidelines and policies for clarity and equity. Based on the findings, we will make recommendations for changes. The living document we have created in LINK is evidence of the ongoing work involved in IDEA accountability.
- We will review unit agenda processes and procedures with an equity lens (DUH, ULPPC, LPC) and make recommendations.
- We will explore alternatives to the current committee makeup and make recommendations on how to adjust membership requirements to make a more representative committee; e.g., asking for I&E's input or representative, untenured faculty, or an external faculty member.
- We will look for opportunities to partner with other ULFA or Library Committees on topics related to the tenure and promotion processes and fit our charge of ensuring reviews are done in a manner consistent with the guidelines.
- We will work with ULFA to support an inclusive culture, the creation and enforcement of a collective agreement, and other cultural norms.
- We will document in the annual committee report what actions we have taken, or the changes made that support IDEA.

## University Libraries Faculty Assembly - Racism Impact Statement

Date Created: 9/29/21, Date Updated: 11/08/21

Approved by vote on: November, 17 2021

Approved by the Dean on: November 23, 2021

### Introduction

Racism and white supremacy culture have a profound impact on nonwhite faculty in higher education and throughout the tenure and promotion process. This document is intended to acknowledge the impact of racism on the tenure and promotion process in general as well as in our specific context of Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Libraries. It is not intended to be comprehensive of everyone's lived experiences or of the effects of racism on all.

## Background

During 2020, in addition to a pandemic, which was highly disruptive, there were highly visible compounding racial tensions. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a rise in anti-AAPI racism and xenophobia from individuals and in political rhetoric stemming directly from the Covid-19 pandemic. In May of 2020, George Floyd was murdered by police officers. His murder sparked Black Lives Matter protests around the world, including in Grand Rapids, MI. The responses to the protests from counter protests, police, and civil officials (such as curfews) added to the stress and grief of Black communities and other historically excluded communities. The racial inequalities in our country were further highlighted by the pandemic itself, as communities of color were at a great risk of getting sick or dying of Covid-19. The lack of health equity and increased risk factors put additional stress on nonwhite faculty.

While it is important to highlight the current circumstances and the impact they may have had on people working during this time who are going up for personnel actions, it is equally important to acknowledge that white supremacy and racist structures have been integrated into higher education systems since their inception. The events described in this section have only aggravated those pre-existing inequities. GVSU is a predominantly white institution and the University Libraries have a predominantly white faculty. Nonwhite faculty do more emotional, and often invisible, labor in order to meet the same standards for tenure and promotion as their white colleagues.

## Racism in the Tenure and Promotion Process

Provided below is a small list of how racism and white supremacy affect the tenure and promotion for nonwhite faculty; this is not designed to be a comprehensive list, but rather a representative sample. Nonwhite faculty experience:

- Higher expectation to support and mentor students and other faculty of color
- Ethno-racial microaggressions
- More emotional work interacting with their colleagues around research
- The feeling that they need to work harder than their colleagues to legitimize their scholarship, demonstrate their productivity, and achieve excellence
- Likely having fewer friends and family in academia who can advise and support them
- More pressure to take on antiracist and DEI service commitments

## Accountabilities

In her statement on May 30, 2020, President Mantella called on the Grand Valley community to “continue to educate and act on our values of inclusion and equity.” In order to recognize the vast and varied impact of racism and white supremacy on nonwhite faculty as well as to continue to work toward building equitable processes that seek to mitigate bias, library faculty

can hold themselves and one another accountable to reflect upon and apply the following practices:

- Be responsible for examining and mitigating the impact of one's own internal bias. Attend trainings on how bias impacts the tenure and promotion process for nonwhite faculty.
- Don't rely on nonwhite faculty to explain antiracist and DEI concepts. Take agency over your own education.
- Practice generous accountability for yourself and others by calling each other in and taking responsibility to acknowledge and learn from instances in which we cause harm.
- Be aware of the invisible labor nonwhite faculty perform in the tenure and promotion process.
- Offer support and mentorship for nonwhite faculty at all levels of promotion, not just for assistant professors.
- As white faculty, when processing emotions about racism, be aware of the harm you might be causing nonwhite faculty. Consider when it might be more appropriate to process with fellow white faculty.

#### Statement Review and Disclaimer

To be most effective, this statement should be reviewed and reflected upon by ULFA on a regular basis prior to the new cycle of personnel processes. It should also be updated along with the ULFA guidelines. This statement is not a replacement for systemic change, but is a placeholder for when more substantive systemic change occurs within the tenure and promotion process.

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